



Turn of the year in East Finchley, Photo by Tony Roberts

## Calenig

By Diana Cormack

In Wales it is customary to give children money on New Year's Day. Years ago groups of youngsters used to visit houses before noon to sing a special song of good wishes, for which they were rewarded with money or food. Both the song and the money given were called Calenig. Calenig was the old pagan New Year celebrated on 5 January, similar in name to the ancient Kalends of January, the start of the calendar year.

Singing, telling fortunes, masquerades and torchlight processions marked this special time dedicated to the gate-keeper god Janus who, having two faces, could look back to the past and forward to the future. People's fear of the unknown could be eased by predicting good fortune whilst giving presents at the Kalends symbolised good luck for the

year ahead.

However, in Wales it was generally believed that good or bad luck was brought by the first visitor of the New Year, according to his or her sex or certain characteristics. Sometimes the luck depended on the initial letter of the visitor's name or even on the name itself.

### Scary Mary

Another ancient custom,

now being revived in some places, is the Mari Lwyd (grey Mary). A horse's skull or something frightening to represent it, would be decorated and mounted on an upright pole, with the pole carrier shrouded in a white sheet. He and his party would process to a chosen house, first looking in through the windows to terrify those inside before the leader knocked on the door. An exchange of verses followed, sung until the people indoors ran out of inspiration, then the Mari Lwyd would be allowed in so everyone could eat, dance and be merry.

Perhaps the Welsh rugby team should try something similar at The Millennium Stadium. It might help them to beat England this year!

## Oh For in 04

THE ARCHER asked some people to contribute to a Wish List of things they would like for East Finchley in 2004. Here is our selection of their responses, in no particular order.

### The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood Committee:

- The children's playground to be improved.
- The new café building to be opened and serving refreshments ASAP.

### From Noel Lynch, GLA member:

- That East Finchley will continue to have a great "village" atmosphere with everyone able to live in peace and harmony.
- That THE ARCHER has another good year acting as "glue" for the local community.

### Local MP Dr Rudi Vis:

- There are many voluntary groups in our area and joining them would encourage more help for those who need it and new friendships.
- A get to know your neighbour scheme would improve relations and add to safety. Simple things such as returning your neighbour's bin to the right place would help fight crime.

### Councillor Alison Moore:

- Investment in youth and community provision in East Finchley – the threatened closure of the Herbert Wilmot Centre just flies in the face of reason.
- The survival and investment in East Finchley Library, a thriving local town-centre, no tube strikes and the 263 buses running on time.

### Eugenia von Piccardio, a manager at the North London Hospice shop:

- That the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute will come to East Finchley so that mature people without transport could enjoy what the Institute has to offer.

### From Colin Knox, our local road sweeper:

- That the public will learn not to drop litter.

### From Lawrie Chivers:

- That the pension situation is remedied and that retired folk get a fair deal.

### From Kevin Finn, editor of THE ARCHER:

- My biggest desire is that people would take time to see things from the perspective of others. This might go some way to eradicating poverty and human suffering.
- I would also like to see THE ARCHER featured as "this week's publication" on the popular satirical programme *Have I Got News for You*.

## Floating in the Air...

### The secret truth behind the library plans

By David Hobbs

The plans showing the library floating in mid air that were part of the council's recent consultation were not a conspiracy to pretend that Waitrose does not exist, but the initial signs of a project to put East Finchley in the forefront of modern technology. According to a secret internal report revealed exclusively to THE ARCHER, the new library would defy gravity by floating twenty feet off the ground next to Park House.

The secret report by A. Booke of consultants Gerry Bild and Bodgit, describes a hi-tech library that does not use up valuable land and which can be moved around East Finchley, offering what will be an almost 'door-to-door' service. The library is described as following council policy in having a state of the art eco-friendly hot air propulsion system enabling it to reach a height of 500 feet and a top speed of 45mph.

The report admits that this exciting new project presents certain problems, especially as people will need to be trained to fly the library. At the moment volunteer librarians are being trained by the RAF, but Mr Booke

recommends that the council recruit teenage computer games players who have reached expert level in Road Crash 2003. Skill will certainly be needed to fly several thousand tons of bricks, books and mortar around East Finchley.

When confronted by THE ARCHER, Mr Booke refused to comment about the feasibility of the plan, but said that if we could put a man on the moon we could move a library around East Finchley. When asked about the relevance of the proposed Waitrose development to his plans for the library he replied that the roof of the superstore would be a convenient place to park the library overnight.

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